

CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL (PORTOBELLO PARK) BILL

OBJECTION 61 – SIGRID NIELSEN

I am writing to object to the whole of the City of Edinburgh Council (Portobello Park) Bill.

This bill would make it possible for the City of Edinburgh Council to appropriate Portobello Park in order to build a new high school, with a car park for 100 cars and artificial pitches, as well as fences and floodlighting.

I have run and walked in Portobello Park at intervals over 30 years. In the last year I have visited it every few days.

These are the amenities I believe I will lose if the school is built:

- i. The views. The people who planted the Millenium Wood on the north side of the park in 2000 did so thoughtfully and carefully. The line of the wood and the line of the mature trees along Milton Road come together below Arthur's Seat and create a superb setting. This view has been named as a Key Protected View by City of Edinburgh Council. The large, rectangular white school building and the car park would destroy the setting completely. Another view north over the grass, the golf course and the Forth, looking toward Fife, would also be disrupted.
- ii. Exercise and health. The park has been very important to me as a place to run and walk, because it offers soil and grass on which to run, because the views provide a congenial environment, and because the park and golf course are exactly a mile around. Training for the BUPA Great Run here after I was made redundant, helped me gain confidence to find new employment. If the school is built the small amount of open space left will be in the noisiest part of what is now the park, level with Milton Road. The woodland paths will become cycle paths and will be paved. Walking or running for physical and mental health will become more difficult and less enjoyable.
- iii. The natural setting of the park. Since visiting the park more often, I have started to appreciate the plants, trees and birds there and to keep track of the seasonal changes. There are many kinds of trees and plants in the Millenium Wood. Spring brought an array of wildflowers and flowering trees. It is a lovely, high-amenity area which I have come to know even better in the past year and do not wish to lose. If the school is built, many of these trees and plants will be removed or become inaccessible to the public, and the park will no longer be open space in, as the judgement of the Inner House of the Court of Session put it, its natural state.

I was very impressed with the fairness and meticulous approach of the Inner House's judgement on the park case in September 2012. For City of Edinburgh Council to ask the Scottish Parliament simply to set that judgement aside – with no legal reason for doing so – strikes me as going beyond the adversarial into direct, immovable opposition. When the Parliament first opened it was hoped to lessen the adversarial nature of the legislative process by, for instance, designing the debating chamber without different seating areas for the government and the opposition. I feel that if

this bill is not in that spirit and, if passed, will not further it – and in my view, this is also the loss of an amenity.

Thank you for considering this objection.

24 June 2013